

REMARKS

In the Office Action, claims 1 and 3-5 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as allegedly unpatentable over U.S. Patent Publication No. 2003-0082448 ("Cho") and in view of Japanese Patent Document No. 2002-260722 ("Sasaki"); and claim 2 is rejected as allegedly obvious over Cho in view of Sasaki and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,156,459 ("Negoro"). Applicants believe that this rejection should be withdrawn as further detailed below.

At the outset, Applicants respectfully submit that the Sasaki reference cannot be applied as prior art in the present case. In this regard, the earliest effective prior art date of Sasaki (e.g., its publication date) is September 13, 2002 which post dates the earliest effective filing date of August 27, 2002 based on the filing date of the priority Japanese Application No. 2002-246848, an English-language translation of which was previously provided in this case. Therefore, the Sasaki reference cannot be applied as prior art, and thus, the obviousness rejections should be withdrawn in view of same. Accordingly, Applicants believe that the present application is in condition for allowance and earnestly solicit reconsideration of same.

Respectfully submitted,

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Dated: December 6, 2006